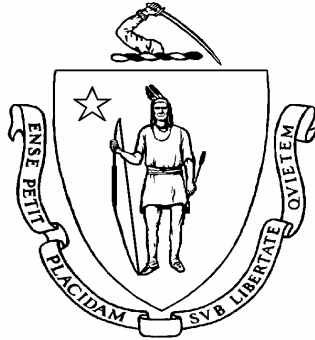


**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**Department of Public Health**  
**Center for Emergency Preparedness**



Special Populations guidance for Local Boards of Health

**Official Edition**

**Date: May 2005**

**Draft Version: 1.0**

## **Introduction**

As you continue to work with your local partners (which includes local emergency management directors) to enhance your community's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, it is important to include 'special populations' in your planning efforts.

(A community listing of Emergency Management Directors can be found here:

[http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=eopsmodulechunk&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Public+Safety+Agencies&L2=Massachusetts+Emergency+Management+Agency&sid=Eeops&b=terminalcontent&f=mema\\_emd\\_A&csid=Eeops](http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=eopsmodulechunk&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Public+Safety+Agencies&L2=Massachusetts+Emergency+Management+Agency&sid=Eeops&b=terminalcontent&f=mema_emd_A&csid=Eeops)).

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Center for Emergency Preparedness (MDPH-CEP), through its Special Populations workgroup, has developed this guide to assist you in the planning process. This guide is intended to be an evolving document, and will be revised based upon community-specific needs in developing emergency preparedness plans for special populations.

The intended audience for this guide is local boards of health and regional public health coalitions in Massachusetts and its purpose is to:

- Define 'special populations';
- Help local health agents in identifying 'their' community-specific special populations;
- Provide a list of relevant resources at MDPH;
- Help develop emergency response measures for special populations.

As many of the resources contained in this guide are hyperlinks this document is best viewed electronically. If you should have any questions or comments about this guide please contact:

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## **What are 'Special Populations'?**

Many definitions of special populations exist, and as such the term 'special populations' can become quite expansive. The MDPH-CEP Special Populations workgroup has developed the following working definition, meant not to exclude groups, but to easier facilitate discussion.

Special populations can be thought of in two major groups:

- **Demographic Group:** This group includes demographically distinct populations or individuals whose demographic distinction may put them at risk of isolation during an emergency.

Examples of demographically distinct populations may include racial minorities; ethnic minorities; populations with distinct cultural or linguistic needs; elders; children; refugees and immigrants; institutionalized individuals, etc.

- **Health Conditions Group:** This group includes individuals or populations with physical disabilities or other functional health impairments that at times may entail dependence on mechanical or technological equipment and also may put them at risk of isolation during an emergency.

Examples of individuals with health conditions may include persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; visually impaired; use of a wheelchair; homebound; or have a mental health and/or substance abuse conditions, etc.

## **How to identify special populations in your community**

During an emergency, communication with all residents in your community is vital. Therefore, you must first know who 'your' special populations are and where they work and/or reside.

The **U.S. Census Bureau** has an online guide that can be searched by State, County, and City: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25000.html>. While this information changes over time, it can give you a broad view of the special populations in your community.

The **Modern Language Association Language Map** uses data from the 2000 U.S. Census to display the locations and numbers of speakers of thirty languages and three groups of less commonly spoken languages in the U.S. This map illustrates the concentration of language speakers in zip codes and counties. In addition, this data can provide actual numbers and percentages of speakers and includes census data about seven additional groups of languages less commonly spoken in the U.S. You can access this map here: <http://www.mla.org/>

**MDPH's Community Health Information Profile** (MassCHIP) is a dynamic, user-friendly information service that provides free, online access to many health and social indicators. With MassCHIP, you can obtain community-level data to assess health needs, monitor health status indicators, and evaluate health programs. To visit MassCHIP please click here: <http://masschip.state.ma.us/>. For information on MassCHIP trainings, click here: <http://masschip.state.ma.us/training.htm>

MDPH's Office of Multicultural Health has prepared a report entitled '**First Language is Not English (FLNE) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Students in Massachusetts Public Schools**'. The FLNE data provides information on households where English is not the first language, and the LEP data provides information on a subset of these FLNE children who are unable to complete their class work in English. The report can be accessed here: [http://www.mass.gov/dph/omh/2001flne\\_rport.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/dph/omh/2001flne_rport.pdf)

In addition to working with local emergency management, it is also recommended that you contact the various agencies/organizations/individuals in your community that may serve, work with, or know of special populations in your community. Introduce yourself and explain your role in the community. If relevant, ask if they have developed an emergency preparedness and response plan and if their plan addresses the needs of special populations. Ask if they know of special population groups in the community, what their level of communication with this group(s) is, and planning strategies that they may have developed. Some of these agencies/organizations/individuals would include:

- Fire, Police, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Departments – Fire, Police, and EMS officials may know of special populations within your community. In addition, these officials have received Incident Command System training, and can offer advice on how to revise your community's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.
- Businesses – Business' often have their own emergency preparedness plans, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency has an excellent Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry available here: [http://www.fema.gov/preparedness/business\\_guide.shtml](http://www.fema.gov/preparedness/business_guide.shtml)
- Ethnic Media – MDPH is constructing a statewide list of major ethnic media organizations and will have this available for dissemination soon.
- Religious Institutions – Many individuals may receive information about public services at their churches, synagogues, mosques, etc, and leaders at these institutions can be a valuable point of contact.
- Nursing Homes, Skilled Nursing Facilities, Home Health Agencies, Visiting Nurse Agencies
- Schools
- Day Care Centers – The Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services maintains a database of all licensed child care providers in Massachusetts here: [http://www.qualitychildcare.org/childcare\\_finding.asp](http://www.qualitychildcare.org/childcare_finding.asp)
- Hospitals – all acute care hospitals in Massachusetts that offer emergency departments services have designated an emergency preparedness coordinator.
- Hospital interpreter services – All DPH-licensed acute care hospital in Massachusetts that offer emergency department services are required to provide interpreter services. These facilities are also required to designate an interpreter services coordinator, and one of the coordinator's duties is to conduct an annual language needs assessment of their service area. Interpreters and interpreter services departments often have established relationships with multiple community groups and are an invaluable resource.
- Community Health Centers – The Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers has a list of community health centers here: <http://www.massleague.org/HealthCenters-communities.htm>

- Assisted Living Centers are licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Elder Affairs, and a community listing (by Towns A-L) can be found here:  
[http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=elderterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Housing&L2=Assisted+Living&sid=Elders&b=terminalcontent&f=assisted\\_residences&csid=Elders](http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=elderterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Housing&L2=Assisted+Living&sid=Elders&b=terminalcontent&f=assisted_residences&csid=Elders)
- Assisted Living Centers (by Town M-Z) can be found here:  
[http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=elderterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Housing&L2=Assisted+Living&sid=Elders&b=terminalcontent&f=assisted\\_residences2&csid=Elders](http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=elderterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Housing&L2=Assisted+Living&sid=Elders&b=terminalcontent&f=assisted_residences2&csid=Elders)
- United States Postal Service – Oftentimes, letter carriers are aware of those individuals on their routes who may have disabilities or other special needs.
- Halfway Houses and Group Homes – MDPH's Bureau of Substance Abuse Services license halfway houses and group homes in Massachusetts that provide substance abuse services. MDPH is developing a comprehensive all-hazards guide for these facilities which should be available in June, 2005. The purpose of this guide is to assist facilities in developing emergency preparedness plans for their facilities, their staff, and their clients in order to maintain needed services during an emergency. For a list of the programs that are funded and licensed by MDPH-BSAS, click here:  
<http://db.state.ma.us/dph/bsas/search.asp>. This website also contains information on the different services offered at each facility.
- Councils on Aging – There are 348 Councils on Aging (COA) in Massachusetts that provide more than 440,000 elders with direct services annually. While each COA is unique to its community, most Councils offer information and referral, transportation, outreach, meals (congregate and home delivered), health screening, and fitness and recreation programs. The Massachusetts Department of Elder Affairs has a community listing of these COA's here:  
[http://www.mass.gov/Elders/docs/serviceorgs\\_coa\\_sites.doc](http://www.mass.gov/Elders/docs/serviceorgs_coa_sites.doc)
- 9-1-1 disability indicator program – This program is a function of the Massachusetts Statewide Emergency Telecommunication Board (SETB), which is under the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety: <http://www.mass.gov/e911/core.htm>. This program allows individuals with special health needs to sign up for a program that will allow 9-1-1 dispatchers to see the specific medical needs (e.g., confined to a wheelchair) of this individual when they make a 9-1-1 call from their home telephone. The 9-1-1 dispatcher can then alert the emergency responders to the specific medical need prior to their arrival at the individual's home.

The 9-1-1 Disability Indicator Municipal Coordinator serves as the liaison between their community and the SETB. Pursuant to the 9-1-1 Standards Regulations, each municipality must designate a municipal coordinator to serve as the local contact with the SETB and the telephone company for all issues regarding 9-1-1 in their community.

If you do not know who your community's 9-1-1 municipal coordinator is, please contact the SETB at 781.944.9113, or [Email: MASETB@state.ma.us](mailto:MASETB@state.ma.us)

- Homeless Shelters – The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless has a listing of homeless shelters (individual, family, and community room) here:

Individual Shelter list: <http://www.mahomeless.org/shelter/expindshelter.html>

Family Shelter list: <http://www.mahomeless.org/shelter/expfamilyshelter.html>

Community Room list: <http://www.mahomeless.org/shelter/expcommshelter.html>

Many homeless shelters may have emergency preparedness plans in place, and one example (which was prepared by UMASS Boston McCormack Graduate School's Center for Social Policy) can be found here: <http://www.mccormack.umb.edu/csp/prepare.jsp>

MDPH can answer some questions about homeless shelters. For questions, please contact Melissa Marlowe, in MDPH's Center for Family and Community Health at 800.311.2229, or 617.624.5976.

- The AIDS Housing Corporation publishes a Directory of HIV/AIDS supported housing programs in Massachusetts, which can be found here: [http://www.ahc.org/publications\\_housing.html](http://www.ahc.org/publications_housing.html)
- The Massachusetts Office on Disability has a list of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinators for their communities located here: <http://www.mass.gov/mod/MunicipalADACoordinators.html>.
- The Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs website ([http://www.mass.gov/dhcd/components/Ind\\_Affairs/default.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dhcd/components/Ind_Affairs/default.htm)) has information on Native American populations in Massachusetts.

## **Resources at MDPH**

**Center for Emergency Preparedness** – MDPH's Center for Emergency Preparedness (CEP) provides a single point of contact for emergency preparedness and response and coordinates efforts across MDPH Centers/Bureaus related to: bioterrorism, chemical/radiological emergencies; hospital preparedness, behavioral health, special populations, and laboratory sciences. For more information about the CEP, please call 617.624.5045. Information on MDPH's emergency preparedness activities may be found here: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/topics/bioterrorism/bt.htm>

**Refugee and Immigrant Health Program** – The Refugee and Immigrant Health Program (RIHP) focuses on the control of communicable diseases among refugees and newly arrived immigrants in Massachusetts. RIHP staff work to increase access to public health services for newcomers. There are RIHP Regional Coordinators who can assist local health agents in approaching and communicating with refugee and immigrant populations in Massachusetts. For more information about this program, or for contact information for the RIHP Regional Coordinators, please contact Jennifer Cochran at 617.983.6596, or visit: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/rhip/wwwrihp.htm>

**Office of Multicultural Health** – MDPH's Office of Multicultural Health (OMH) promotes the health and well being of racial, ethnic and linguistic minority communities throughout the Commonwealth by increasing the Department of Public Health's capacity to respond effectively to the critical public health needs of these communities. For more information about the OMH, please contact Brunilda Torres at 617.624.5471, or visit: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/omh/omh.htm>

**Division for Perinatal, Early Childhood, and Special Health Needs**— projects within this Division include the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public health programs for individuals with disabilities or special needs throughout their life span. The Division also operates a TTY line (617.624.5992), and is proposing to work with the MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to enhance this capacity during an emergency. For more information, please contact Cheryl Bushnell at 617.624.6025, or Fillonie Saint-Louise at 617.624.6067. You can also visit their website at: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/dshn.htm>

**Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC)** – The overall goal of MDPH’s EMSC program is to ensure the delivery of state-of-the-art emergency medical services to all children in Massachusetts.

EMSC objectives include:

- The development of standards in pediatric care and equipment, and the integration of these standards into the greater Massachusetts EMS system
- Support for training in pediatric care in order to increase the level of knowledge and skills required by EMT’s and paramedics who treat children
- Guidelines for primary care pediatricians and family practice physicians in order to assure that their offices are ready for emergencies
- Guidelines for pediatric care in hospital emergency departments
- Guidelines for emergency readiness in Massachusetts schools
- Guidelines on family-centered care to hospital emergency departments that serve children with special health care needs
- Support for childhood injury prevention at the community level

The website for EMSC can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/emsc/maemsc.htm>  
For further information, please contact Janet Berkenfield at 617.624.5088.

**Office of Elder Health** – The Office of Elder Health at the MDPH seeks to foster healthy aging through education and training on health promotion and disease prevention. The award-winning Keep Moving program of walking clubs that reaches more than 3000 older adults across the Commonwealth exemplifies this health promotion approach. Other innovative programs provide training and education on healthy aging, physical activity, nutrition, substance abuse and end-of-life issues. See <http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/elderhealth/index.htm> for further information on the Office of Elder Health.

**School Health Services** – MDPH designed the Essential School Health Service program model to promote development of high quality, community-based school health service programs in municipalities throughout the Commonwealth. For more information about MDPH’s School Health Services program, please contact Anne Sheetz, at 617.624.6060, or visit their website at: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/schoolhealth/index.htm>

The **F.O.R. Families Program** is a home visiting program whose primary goal is to help families’ transition from homelessness to stable permanent housing. This is a joint program of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance and MDPH’s Center for Family and Community Health. For more information about this program, please contact Melissa Marlowe at 617.624.5976, or visit: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/forfams.htm>

## **Focus Groups**

**Family TIES focus groups** – MDPH's Center for Community Health, in conjunction with MDPH-CEP, is conducting focus groups for families who have children with special health needs in order to address issues related to emergency preparedness. Results from these focus groups will help inform the Family Support Plan legislatively mandated in 2003 by the Governor's office to address the community support needs of families experiencing special needs and or disabilities, as well as inform MDPH in its planning and response to disasters of all kinds. For more information about these focus groups, please contact Fillonie Saint-Louis at 617.624.6067.

## **Training**

**Behavioral Health Disaster Responder Training Course** - The Departments of Public Health and Mental Health, along with Boston Medical Center's Center for Multicultural Mental Health, have developed a Behavioral Health Disaster Responder Training Course. Behavioral Health Disaster Responders, or 'crisis counselors', provide a short-term intervention with individuals and/or groups experiencing psychological reactions to a major disaster and its aftermath. For more information regarding this course, upcoming course dates and locations, registration, and the provision of CME's and CEU's, please visit: <http://www.cmmh-cmtp.org/services-bhdrtp-trainingdates.php>

## **Manuals**

**Directions: Resources for Your Child's Care**, is a manual for families of children with special health care needs. To obtain a copy of this manual, which includes a section on emergency preparedness, please visit this site: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/directions/index.htm>. This manual is also available in Spanish here: [http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/directions/index\\_spanish.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/directions/index_spanish.htm)

## **Websites**

**MassSupport** provides information, education, and referral services specifically geared towards the psychological impact (increased substance abuse, anxiety, panic, depression, severe emotional trauma, etc.) of natural and/or man-made disasters. MassSupport consists of: (1) a website (<http://www.mass.gov/samh/>); (2) a toll-free, 24/7 informational telephone line (866-237-8274); and (3) associated print materials. The print materials are general in nature and include a Family Disaster Plan and a Family Emergency Card. These materials can be downloaded or sent to you at no cost.

**FEMA emergency planning and special needs population course:**  
<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/pub/register.html>

**National Center on Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities:**  
<http://www.disabilitypreparedness.org/>

**An ADA Guide for Local Governments: Making Community Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs Accessible to People with Disabilities:**  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/emergencyprep.htm>

**FEMA website in Spanish:** [http://www.fema.gov/spanish/index\\_spa.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/spanish/index_spa.shtm)

**CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response website in Spanish:** <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/es/>

**DHS Ready.gov in Spanish:** <http://www.ready.gov/espanol/>

## **Other Resources**

For a listing of the **Massachusetts Department of Mental Health's** area offices, click here:

<http://mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=eohhs2subtopic&L=5&L0=Home&L1=Government&L2=Departments+and+Divisions&L3=Department+of+Mental+Health&L4=DMH+Offices&sid=Eeohhs2>

The **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals** has developed a guide that provides information on how to care for a pet during an emergency. Some individuals may not want to leave a pet unattended during an emergency, and this guide can help them prepare in advance <http://www.asPCA.org/site/PageServer?pagename=emergency>

**Will Public Health's Response to Terrorism be Fair?** (Article):

<http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9086/>

**Simply Put** is CDC's guide to putting information in readable, plain language. The Simply Put Guide contains tips for print materials, such as brochures and fact sheets, for use by any audience. Print messages are more effective when they are easy-to-read and attractive to audiences. To learn more about achieving both these qualities in your print message, see [Simply Put](#)

## **Including provisions for special populations in your community's emergency management plan**

MDPH is not the sole State agency responsible for planning and providing for special populations in an emergency, and local boards of health are not the sole local entity responsible for planning and providing for special populations in their community. MDPH has been reaching out to other State agencies with regard to this issue, and we encourage local boards of health to reach out to other agencies/organizations/individuals in your community in order to include special populations in your community's emergency management plan.

Some initial steps to take when developing your plan would include:

- Determine whether a contact list of special population agencies and/or organizations for your community exists. If not, work with your community partners to create one
- Determine whether the special population agencies/organizations in your community have emergency preparedness plans currently in place. If not, stress the importance of developing and maintaining an emergency preparedness plan, and share some of the resources found in this guide (e.g., the homeless shelter emergency preparedness plan developed by UMASS Boston McCormack Graduate School's Center for Social Policy: <http://www.mccormack.umb.edu/csp/prepare.jsp>; the MDPH/MDMH comprehensive all-hazards guide for mental health/substance abuse facilities (available in June, 2005); and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry: [http://www.fema.gov/preparedness/business\\_guide.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/preparedness/business_guide.shtm))
- Determine the resources within your community and/or Coalition/Region with regard to special populations
- Contact MDPH for technical assistance

**We hope that you have found this guide to be useful in revising your community's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. This guide is an initial outreach effort, and represents only one facet of MDPH's emergency preparedness efforts focusing on special populations. MDPH is working with individuals who work directly with special populations, and we are also ensuring that our own preparedness plans take into account the distinct needs of special populations. In addition, we will be working with other State agencies in Massachusetts to develop strategies for effectively communicating with special populations. As stated earlier, this guide is intended to be an evolving document, and will be revised as MDPH grows in our understanding of the needs of communities in developing emergency preparedness plans for their special populations.**